Hosea 1-3
BCC:
11/22/26
Receive His Love

DT: God persistently pursues his people, no matter the cost.

I'm not sure I really want God to speak to me. (repeat) Because when I look at examples in the Bible, God often calls his people to do really difficult things.

This is especially true when it comes to his prophets. Prophets are God's spokespeople. Abraham Heschel says that prophets "make the invisible God audible." But when it comes to these prophets, God doesn't just give them a message to speak with their words, he also gives them messages to speak with their lives. These are known as sign-acts, where the prophet's lives will embody the message.

Both Isaiah (Isa. 20.1-6) and Micah (Mic. 1.8-9) are told to walk around in their skivvies…

Jeremiah (27.1-20) is told to wear a big, huge yoke around his neck…

Ezekiel is told to lay on his left side for 390 days & then his right side for 40 more days (4.4-8).

But the prophet Hosea maybe has the most difficult of all the tasks given to the prophets. He is told to go and marry a prostitute….

Why? Why would God call his prophet to do such an outlandish, difficult thing?! Because God speaks his message, both through the prophet's words and through their lives. And through Hosea's words and life, will see that **DT: God persistently pursues his people, no matter the cost.**

Go ahead and turn to the book of Hosea, which is after Daniel. We are starting a new sermon series called Redeeming love, through this powerful, but often forgotten book. And it begins with what is called a superscription, you see these in some of the prophetic books. You see these in the Psalms a lot. They give us helpful background information to the book.

Hosea 1:1 (NIV) — 1 The word of the Lord that came to Hosea son of Beeri during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel:

Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (show pic.) from about 755-725 BC. At this point in Israel's story because of King Solomon's sin, the Kingdom had divided into the Northern 10 tribes (typically called Israel or Ephraim) and then 2 Southern tribes (typically called Judah). So, that's not good…

But, both the N & the S. Kingdoms were experiencing financial prosperity in the mid 8th century! But the problem was that yes, they were financial prosperous, but spiritually, they were impoverished… This is often the case in our lives, when things seem to be going good, we often forget about God… And in the Northern Kingdom, we are told that what they did was set up 2 golden calves in the Dan & Bethel. **Their entire kingdom is built on unfaithfulness and idolatry.**

And it's because of this idolatry and unfaithfulness that God calls Hosea to do something difficult.

Hosea 1:2–3 (NIV) — 2 When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, marry a promiscuous woman (ESV: A wife of whoredom) and have children (ESV: of whoredom) with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness (ESV: great whoredom) to the Lord." 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son."

In other words, what I want you to do Hosea is marry an unfaithful woman because the people have been unfaithful to me!

One of the key metaphors throughout Scripture between God and his people is the metaphor of a marriage. Christopher West says that one of the key messages of the Bible is that God wants to marry his people. The Bible begins with a marriage in Gen. 2.24, and ends with a marriage in Rev. 19, and all throughout the Old and New Testaments, God is called the Husband and Israel or the Church is His bride.

But the problem is that from the very beginning of this marriage relationship, all the way back to Exod. 32 & the golden calf, the people have cheated on God. It's as if they cheat on him on the honeymoon, and

continue to cheat on him once they get back from the relationship. They have ruptured the relationship. And God has finally had enough…

So, God calls Hosea to embody his relationship with Israel. Go, marry a promiscuous woman… like I have. And Hosea does it. He takes Gomer as his wife, and they begin to have children. But these children will be given names that are going to be messages to Israel.

They have three kids: 1) Jezreel – which is a place God is going to punish one of the kings, 2) Lo-Ruhamah, which means no compassion, and 3) Lo-ammi, which means not my people. Sorry Loami… you're town name means "not my people" in Hebrews… But the point is that because of their unfaithfulness, their special, covenantal, marriage relationship with God is broken… Fast forward to Hos. 2.4-5 because here you can feel the weight of Israel's sin and this broken relationship.

Hosea 2:4–5 (NIV) 4 I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery. 5 Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my olive oil and my drink.'

Did you hear what Israel said? "I will chase go after my lovers…" So, what will God do when his people are chasing after other gods! How does he pursue people who are running from him? 3 times in chapter 2, God answers with the word, "therefore." Here's the first one.

Hosea 2:6–7 (NIV) — 6 Therefore I will block her path with thornbushes; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. 7 She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them…

The first way God pursues his people in this passage is that…. 1) God blocks. (v. 2.6-7)

God blocks his people from experiencing satisfaction in the wrong things. The phrase in v. 6, 'wall her in' means to literally put a fence or hedge around. The ides here is that God puts a protective fence around her so that she won't get too far away from him… A couple summers ago I got to visit the Folletts who are some of our best friends and missionaries in W. Africa (they'll be here in Feb.). And one of the things they were most excited about when I got there was their new backyard area and fence. Here's a pic **(show pic).** It was absolutely stunning. But the point of the

fence was less to keep people out of their backyard and more to keep people in. At the time they had 3 girls under the age of 5 running around, so they wanted to keep them in there for their safety!

In a similar way, God is using this blocking, this fence, as an act of grace to keep his people close to him so they won't get too far away. And what this looks like is as they chase after other lovers, they can't catch them. It's like chasing the wind or chasing the end of a rainbow, it is impossible to do! He blocks them from feeling satisfied by these other lovers.

I want to show you a picture from a website called Fullofeyes.com **(show pic)**. I love the artist's rendition of this passage. There's a lot we could talk about, but I want you to notice that the fence is filled with thorns (which is from v. 6) … so even though God is protecting the people, blocking their way, it is still painful for them… but it is in this painful pursuit where she can't get what she thinks she needs, He is protecting them from even more pain and death.

We are the woman in the picture… we are Israel, chasing after these other gods… so, when you think about your own life, what other gods are you chasing after? Is it money, happiness, success, sex? What is it?

Whatever it is, if it is not Christ, it will eventually lead to pain and death.

God blocks our way so we can't catch these other lovers and feel satisfied. And as a result, it leads us back to the one who will truly satisfy us. Vs. 7 finishes by saying, "Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.'" God pursues his people by blocking our pursuit of other lovers so that we will turn back to Him.

Unfortunately, Israel still thinks someone else is providing for her. Listen to what God says. ***Hosea 2:8 (NIV) — 8 She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold— which they used for Baal."***

The problem with Israel is that she does not acknowledge, literally KNOW, the LORD is the one blessing her. This word for acknowledge, or know, is used for intimacy between a husband and wife. But Israel does not

know that the LORD is the one giving her all these gifts of life. Instead, she takes these gifts and uses it to worship Baal, a false god!

So, what will God do? We're told in v. 9-ff and it doesn't sound pretty.

Hosea 2:9–13 (NIV) — 9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her naked body. 10 So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands. 11 I will stop all her celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days—all her appointed festivals. 12 I will ruin her vines and her fig trees, which she said were her pay from her lovers; I will make them a thicket, and wild animals will devour them. 13 I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot," declares the Lord.

The second way God persistently pursues his people is that 2. **God removes (v. 8-13).** God removes his gifts from His people.

Now, we need to pause and state the obvious… there is a lot of shocking language in those verses. He will uncover and expose her (v. 9-10). He will stop her celebrations (v. 11). He will ruin and punish her (v. 12-13)… That's terrifying, and you may even be thinking to yourself that this doesn't sound like God's character, which we see in Jesus. I think we are supposed to stop and be startled by these statements. But we need to understand that the prophets often use language like this to grab our attention and shock us, & at the same time realize that this is real judgment from God. Why such stark judgment language for Israel? Because she has forgotten God! Look at those last words from the LORD**, "me she forgot."**

These verses remind us that God has graciously given gifts to His people. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights" James 1.17 says." Israel has experienced this time and time again! And remember, N. Israel is experiencing financial prosperity right now. But the problem with financial prosperity is that it often leads to complacency. And we are told at the very end of v. 13, all of these gracious gifts have led to Israel *forgetting* God. **They don't KNOW God (v. 8), and now they have FORGOTTEN God (v. 13).**

The story of Israel makes me think about Christmas. Imagine with me, this year you save up some money to buy your kids, or grandkids, or niece or nephew, a really nice gift. You saved up and got them a bike! And

Christmas morning comes, they wake up, run out of their room, they see the bike and they are absolutely ecstatic! So, they ask if they can ride it, you say yes and… they ride that bike right over to your neighbor's house and they tell them thank you for the bike! What in the world?! You probably couldn't believe your eyes!

Essentially, that's what Israel was doing to God. They received the gifts of God… but then they would go and worship this other false god named Baal, time and time again… So, God decided it was finally time to take back the gifts he had given. **"me she forgot."**

Sometimes gifts have to be taken away to be truly appreciated.

If we aren't careful, Israel's story can quickly become our story too... Seasons of prosperity often lead to seasons of complacency… I find I pray way more in my difficult seasons then in my 'good' seasons because it's in the difficult seasons I know I need help!

So right now, in honor of Thanksgiving week, whatever season you may be in… how can you tell God thank you? How can you cultivate a heart of gratitude? What good gifts has he lavished on you? I want you to take a moment and write down 3-5 things to just tell him thank you for… what are the things you have taken for granted? … your family, your friends, your home, your car, your clothes, whatever you can think of.

And as you do that… remember that those gifts he has given you are all meant to point you to the giver of the gifts. And the greatest gift of all is a relationship with the giver of the gifts! We must never forget the one who showers us with gifts!

Israel had forgotten their giver, "**Me she forgot."** After hearing those, do we expect God to say next? More judgment?! Here's what he says.

Hosea 2:14 (NIV) — 14 "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her."

What?! That's not we would expect! In light of their forgetting God, **God allures them. (v. 14-23)** Even after all their sins, God will allure Israel. He will lit. "speak to her heart." Think of boys when they first start dating girls, and they typically pull out all the stops… the flowers, the candies, the candles… It's like God is doing that with Israel! He is trying to get her attention and woo her back into a relationship with himself.

But to woo her, he must lead her back into the wilderness, to strip away all of the other gods. He's rewriting her story.

God will do whatever it takes to restore his relationship with His people again. He is persistent in his pursuit of His people. Yes, God's people have sinned and therefore they will receive punishment. BUT the LORD will restore His people. The prophets will speak words of judgment over and over again, but they always end in hope. I want to highlight some of the hopeful verses.

Hosea 2:16 (NIV) — 16 "In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'

Their intimacy here is restored. They are re-married. They are restored. Their sin is not greater than God's grace.

Hosea 2:19–20 (NIV) — 19 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. 20 I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord.

The marriage relationship is restored and in v. 20, you will KNOW the LORD. God is persistently pursuing His people, and it will lead to his marriage with them once again.

When I read v. 19-20, I can't help but think about **my own marriage with Jonell**e. He's our wedding photo from over nine years ago. One of my favorite parts of that day (& all weddings) was our vows. Because in that moment, we were promising to be committed to one another, forever… in the good and in the bad.

And here in Hosea 2, with his perfect love and with his perfect faithfulness, God vows to always be committed and married to His people.

And the end of the chapter is God completely reversing his judgment from ch. 1.

Hosea 2:23 (NIV) — 23 I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.' "

This is a complete reversal! God allures his people back into a marriage with Him.

1 Pet. 2.10 helps us realize that this story of Israel is our own story when he quotes this passage from Hosea and says: ***1 Peter 2:10 (NIV) —10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."***

In other words, when you trust in Jesus, God is committed to you forever. So, if you've never made a decision to follow Jesus, or have wandered from the faith… you need to know that God is alluring you, speaking to your heart, & persistently pursuing you because he wants a relationship with you forever!

But to bring us back home isn't free… It costs more than we can imagine.

Hosea 3:1–2 (NIV) — 1 The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley."

Hosea has to go back and buy his adulterous wife... He has to pay for what is already rightfully his. The LORD tells him to go again and get his wife. And Hosea does it… And so does God.

The fourth way God pursues His people is that he **God pays. (3.1-2)**

And God doesn't command Hosea to do something he isn't willing to do himself. As much as we might try…we are still unfaithful in this relationship. We still fail. We still sin and disobey God. We are enslaved to sin. We are Gomer… Yet because of His love for us, God willingly took on flesh in Jesus, became like us in every way and lived the perfect life, and then paid the penalty of sin by dying on the cross for you and me. He paid for us!

Why? Why would God pay for you?

A couple weeks ago, my mom and dad (Mi-maw & Pi-paw) came down to see us. And Lily, our oldest, absolutely loves them and she loves to play Mi-Maw. Well we were headed somewhere, so my mom put Lily in

her car seat. And out of the blue, Lily asked Mi-Maw this question: “Mi-Maw… why do you love me?” Great question, Lily.

It got me about God… God, why do you love me? After everything I’ve done? After all the times I’ve wandered from you? Why would you pay for me? And his answer was simple: Because you are mine… You are His… and He will persistently pursue you because he wants a relationship with you… no matter the cost. And the moments when you don’t feel like it’s true, the cross of Jesus proves it is true. God persistently pursues you… no matter the cost.

So, here’s my invitation for us this morning: **receive his love**. Whether you are new to this Christianity thing or have been a follower of Jesus for a long time, I think we are called to the same response: receive the persistent, costly love of Jesus.

The way that we will do that today is through communion. Communion is open to all believers in King Jesus, and in this moment we will have trays that are going to be passed around. And in the trays there is a cup with juice in it that is Christ’s blood that was poured out ***for you***. And then there’s one with bread in it, which is Christ’s body that was sacrificed ***for you***. Eat and drink them, and remember what Jesus paid to bring home. Thank him, and receive his love for you today. Let’s pray.